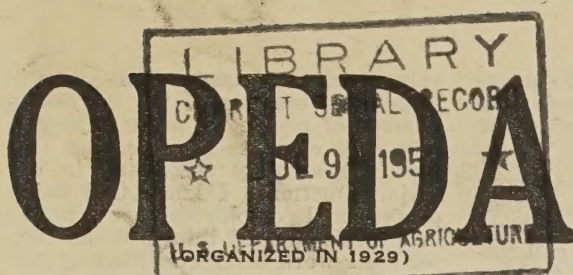


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Organization of Professional Employees of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

Issued at Washington, D. C., Each Quarter of Calendar Year
VOLUME 4 JUNE 1952 NO. 2
Address P. O. Box 381, Washington 4, D. C.

Dr. P. V. Cardon at the April Luncheon

OPEDA was most fortunate in having one of its own outstanding members as the speaker on April 15 before a group of eighty-five of us on the subject:

The Scientist in Service to Government

In opening his remarks, Dr. Cardon said: "I feel somewhat guilty—at least I have a touch of guilt on my conscience—because it is only in recent months that I have come more clearly and correctly to appreciate the activities of this organization. The more I have studied recent statements and reports of progress and objectives, the more I have come to feel that perhaps I was negligent in not having done more in supporting it and its objectives. The last two issues of OPEDA's newsletter carried among other things, the reports of committees that have been active—very active—in furthering some objective studies they have had under way which, it seems to me, are sufficient alone to justify the existence of this organization, with a membership of as many professional employees of the Department as it would be possible to obtain.

It was after Dr. Carl Taylor's committee Report on Public Service came out that I was asked to be here today. It was suggested that you might be interested in my comments on some of the criteria set forth in that report. These I intend to present. First I want to commend your committee, Dr. Taylor, on that report. It seems to me that it has a tremendous scope and it is important that you tried to bring it down into definite criteria that offer food for thought by employees and employing agencies alike."

Dr. Cardon then expressed regret that he had been unable to study the report of Dr. Carl Colvin's Committee on Working Criteria which had just come out in the March newsletter, but that even a cursory examination indicated that his remarks today would fit into that report as well.

Professional Standards.—Referring to the Taylor Committee criteria, in order, Dr. Cardon continued: "First, 'when the employee is motivated and guided by the highest standards of his chosen profession'. It seems that these standards arise out of three basic factors. Certainly there is something inherent in the individual himself that goes a long way in determining his motives and standards of performance in his work. Without some inherent interest in his soul and the ambition to do a good job he will not do as well as he would if motivated by a compelling desire for effective service to the public. The second factor entails the individual's background of training and experience. That stems not alone from the particular discipline

with which he is concerned, but is affected also by the third factor: the environment that was conducive to his training and experience.

"Illustrative of what I call motive or standard of performance as seen in my colleagues is the question of whether to continue in public service or respond to individual interest and go into private employment. Two of my closest colleagues were faced with this dilemma after 30 years in public work. They finally decided to leave, and each in his own way is now doing a good job. Before they left, however, each of them told me there was a tremendous question in their minds as to whether they wanted to leave the broad selfless objectives of public service and enter into what might be called a much narrower field. Two years afterwards each also told me that they were still weighing in their own minds just how to bring their total interest down into the much narrower field. This experience is indicative of a selfless interest—of trying to do something for everybody—toward the advancement of the social welfare.

"In my own experience," continued Dr. Cardon, "when I was about to retire from ARA I was approached by two outside organizations and went through the same kind of thinking. Even though the compensation would have been several times more than I had ever received before, I felt that I preferred keeping the amenities of public service rather than losing them. I think this is important to the individual; with respect to recognition of the public needs, certainly it is essential. Surely each of us now and then is confronted with a dilemma in trying to determine whether what we have done, or propose to do, is really by way of satisfying the public needs. I think we often have a feeling of doubt as to what we might do or be called upon to do.

"I remember an instance when I was called over the telephone by the manager of a large sugar outfit; I was then director of a State experiment station. He was complaining about the publicity activities of our station regarding the white fly. The entomologists had found evidence out on the desert of a large forthcoming infestation. The company was disturbed because they didn't want this evidence publicized before the ensuing campaign for sugar beet plantings. Farmers were becoming concerned because they felt that if they planted they would encounter heavy damage. The company wanted us to keep still about it. This is merely illustrative of what we are often up against. Is it better to lay out all the facts, and let each make his own decision, or to try and guide everybody in the direction someone thinks they ought to go? I decided it was much better for the

growers to know that they were faced by this infestation and that it was also better for the company to face it too. A contract could not stop the infestation; the losses would be there anyway. The important thing in the public interest was to try and meet the situation and thus be able to minimize it rather than to ignore it.

"I think I have found my guide for such activities epitomized for me—long after I had tried to put it into words myself—by Winston Churchill. In his own language, 'The only guide to a man is his conscience. The only shield to his memory is the rectitude and sincerity of his actions'. I believe we will all fare better if we observe the dictates of our own consciences."

Use of Facilities.—At this point Dr. Cardon referred to the "effective use of facilities. Many employees not sharing in active administrative responsibilities fail to appreciate the 14-month process each year that must be gone through to secure money. Unless you have really had the experience of going up and asking for money you are likely to feel the Department is a little lax in making funds available for equipment and facilities. I think we are all interested in considering the cost of these facilities, which are public property, and in avoiding waste and making the best use of them that we can. But the most troublesome individual I have ever tried to satisfy was one who seemed to have the desire to go through all the most recent catalogs in order to replace his equipment, the idea apparently being that all his problems could be solved if only he had new equipment. About the most effective answer I could make here was to quote an old friend who said, 'Just remember always that some of the greatest discoveries in science ever made were done with a stew pan on the kitchen stove'. I mention this point, since many workers think they must always have a larger laboratory and more facilities and assistants. These will never take the place of brainpower, ideas, and initiative in the launching of research activities. I do believe, however, that good and adequate facilities should be had and be well cared for.

Team Work.—Dr. Taylor's criterium, "when he practices team work and helps to develop esprit de corps in the organization of which he is a part," was next referred to. Dr. Cardon said that tremendous progress along this line had been made during the last several years; he felt that there has come about a much more general recognition of the importance of what we call "team work". "This type of activity," he said, "seems to hold out three different kinds of benefits: to individuals, to the cooperating team itself, and to the employing agency as well. From the standpoint

of the individual, it seems to me that there is nothing that affords a greater measure of reassurance to the participants than to realize that others are working on slightly different phases of one and the same general problem. If he knows that they too are conscious of the problem on which he is engaged, an exchange of ideas and the relationship of thinking on the problem as a whole will result. Moreover, such an attitude develops the perspective which we all realize to be so important in any undertaking. We all have moments when our feelings are not so high; it is such association with others that lends a tremendous uplift to us just when we need it.

"From the standpoint of the team itself, merely to know what can happen under such circumstances is gratifying in the extreme. I believe I have never experienced more satisfaction than when I have had full cooperation in such a joint type of endeavor. I could name and cite many illustrations of team response to that type of association, but I would like to mention only one. Some time ago I was examining the total project list of an experiment station. Men in four different departments were found to be working on phosphorus but there was no indication of joint thinking among them, so I called them together in a group. I simply raised the question as to whether or not it would be useful if they knew something about each other's work, if it might not help in arriving at a common understanding, and if they could not work out the matter as one joint project instead of four separate ones. For awhile there was great indecision, but they finally decided to try out the plan anyway. There was a crop man working on crop responses and effects on yields, a dairy husbandryman, a chemist studying phosphorus as one of the mineral elements in the skeletal structure of rats and in their bloodstream, and finally a soils man. Each of the individual objectives toward which they were working were minor. One day, six or eight months later, I went out to the steer-feeding lots and there I found a bacteriologist (who hadn't been out of the laboratory in years) wading around in the muck, eager about getting samples from the jugular veins of the steers. 'Oh,' he said to me, 'I see the whole picture now; I feel nearer to the solution of my problem than I have been in a long time; I want to get at the bones of these animals'. I told him that was alright and that I would arrange for him to get the bones. Not in 20 years had he gotten this much satisfaction out of his work. All the other men felt the same way—working their individual findings into the problem as a whole. I feel that if that type of approach were encouraged by administrators in general, we would be able to advance the effectiveness of research tremendously.

Efficiency.—"Concerning the services rendered, I would make this comment: Somehow I prefer in this professional work to use the word 'proficient' instead of 'efficient.' I believe that some of our work would be difficult to measure merely in terms of efficiency, because some professional work may be inefficient even though it is

proficient. Recently I sat in at a meeting with some Canadian friends who said that they had stopped using the word 'efficient' altogether.

Institutional Policy.—"One more thing I would like to mention is that I believe the one great lack in Federal and State service is what I call 'institutional policy'. I hope that one day someone will come out with a clearer statement, that would be useful to all employees, of the overall objectives of the employing institutions. I feel that we are too often cut up into minor categories of policy to the detriment of the substantial overall policies and aims of the total agency; because of this situation many unnecessary difficulties are bound to follow. I think that all individual functions should be related to the overall functions of an agency. If this were done I believe a great many of these difficulties would be overcome and that it would be a help to the individual employees, not only in clarifying their own relationships with the particular functions they are interested in, but in all of the functions of their group as a whole.

"Certainly the organization faces the obligation of having an effective division of labor, but I think that we sometimes pay too much attention to organization charts. I am not an organization chart fan! probably this is somewhat on the side of heresy, but I am afraid of charts as so many things can fall between the blocks. There is an awful lot of space between these blocks even though they appear close together on the chart. There is a total job to be done and it is important to relate all activities to that job. I believe we should look first to the job to be done and then see what is needed to do it; in other words, let us not try to fit the job to the chart. I have heard many say, 'This is where I work' and 'This is where somebody else works'. Too frequently the individuals serve as little discrete blocks instead of as integral parts of the whole.

"Another thing I want to mention refers to organizational requirements. From the standpoint of a professional employee, the employing agency should always be conscious of creating and maintaining an environment conducive to good professional work—conducive not only to good individual effort but also to joint effort by all who are involved. Breaking down the research problem into individual segments is no more important than integrating those segments so that all workers may see in common the horizons toward which their joint work is leading.

The Housekeeping Job.—"Finally, I would say with considerable hesitancy a few things about this growing job of housekeeping that we all have to do. I say 'hesitancy' because I know how serious it is for those who are concerned with facilitating procedures. I know what the problems are because I have talked at length with other agencies that have to do with these same housekeeping jobs. When I stop to think of the tremendous expansion and development that has taken place in such activities during the last 20 years I am led to feel that it is time for everyone to stop, look, and listen. I should say that the dollar available for performance has been shrinking in

value during the last several years in large part because of the increasing number of people we must employ to take care of these housekeeping jobs that are actually secondary to our major functions. I know that many professional employees are chafing under this sort of thing. When they see their work being curtailed by lowered appropriations and the many housekeeping procedures confronting them, it is very difficult for them to feel that all is as it should be. Within individual agencies much can be done to improve procedures and thus to reduce the costs. Expenses should be minimized, especially if they are interfering with the professional job. But many things are impossible for us to change on account of actions by the Congress, the Budget Bureau, Civil Service, GAO, and other official groups—in such cases all that we in the Department can do is to comply. I hope, however, that more people will pay constructive attention to this trend and will find ways at least to minimize its effect. I sometimes wonder if these housekeeping costs have not already gone so far as to exceed the point of diminishing returns.

"Well, this is my story. Thank you very much."

A Letter From Assistant Secretary Knox T. Hutchinson

"I was very much pleased to receive the report of the OPEDA Committee on Working Criteria. This report, reflecting as it does the views of a representative group of professional employees with respect to factors which affect their performance, can be of very real value to the Department. Your organization is to be congratulated for a fine job.

"You mention that you plan to publish the report in your Newsletter. I hope you will give it wide distribution among the professional and administrative staff of the Department.

"Because of its importance, we should like to arrange for discussion of the committee's report at Secretary's Staff Meeting in the near future. If it is agreeable, we should like to have the committee present its findings and follow this with general discussion of the problems which the report raises. We will get in touch with you a little later with regard to the exact date."

Legislative Activities

With respect to legislation, you have already been apprised of OPEDA's general activities during the 1st session of the 82nd Congress. It would be difficult, however, to detail all that has been done through official hearings, individual conversations with members of the Civil Service Commission, congressional committee members, and individual Senators and Representatives, as well as through correspondence and conversations urging our members to back OPEDA's elected officials by personal letters or contacts with their own members of Congress. (See the "request statement" on the last page of the March newsletter.) OPEDA failed to get all it asked for in 1951, but as you know, this is an economy-minded Congress

and half a loaf is surely better than none on the pay and leave legislation by the first session.

Annuities

At this writing there seems to be a chance that the second session will approve a temporary increase in annuities pending the comprehensive study now being made of the Government's whole Civil Service system. Many members of the House committee are now on record as favoring the boost; hearings are imminent and I have asked to be notified. The Senate Appropriation Committee has already acted favorably on its bill (S. 2968).

There is no chance at this session for further consideration of retirement credit for previous service under Federal-State cooperative programs, but informal committees of OPEDA, including your Executive Offices, have presented in legal form the essential features of the Ecton Bill (S. 1019) to each of the three members of a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, and to a staff officer of Senator Olin D. Johnston's full committee. The matter is thus again "in the mill" and ready to be pushed further as future opportunity may offer.

Leave

I appeared before Senate hearings on May 8 against the highly unfair leave rider appended to the Independent Offices Appropriation Bill recently approved by the House. This rider has also been opposed by President Truman and many others on down the line as highly "unfair and harsh" legislation, and especially so in view of the reductions in leave benefits passed by the 1st session of this Congress. The statement which I presented in executive session before the Senate subcommittee was as follows:

"The continual discussions of and changes made in the leave policies of government are having a very disruptive effect on the morale of Federal employees generally. At its first session this Congress made a rather considered study of the leave situation and passed a law that became effective only as recently as January 6, 1952. To bring this matter up again for further change at this time is not only very disconcerting to government workers but leads them to wonder where they stand and whether government actually has any real policy concerning leave. We therefore wish respectfully to protest against what seems to us the harsh and unjust provisions of the annual leave rider appended to the Independent Offices Appropriation Bill (H.R. 7072), as well as against the rider method in general for handling important legislation.

"This proposed action appears particularly unfair to Federal workers of the classified service in view of reductions in the amount of annual leave approved during the first session of this Congress. At that same time Congress also specifically removed all restrictions on the accumulation of annual leave up to a maximum of 60 days; this action served to mitigate somewhat the new reductions in annual leave and at the same time provided a cushion against possible unemployment or prolonged illness. In this connection it should be remembered that government employees are not entitled to any severance pay or

unemployment insurance such as private workers now receive. Thus to deprive them of their leave accumulated in good faith for possible use against these or other emergencies would, it seems to us, amount to a virtual breach of contract by government with its employees.

"Moreover, the House rider entails another injustice to many workers who, because of necessity for national emergency work, would be deprived of some or all of their currently earned or accumulated leave, while at the same time others employed in less critical government units would be allowed their full quotas. Further comment on these points would be superfluous other than to call attention to the probable effects on current morale and future recruitment were this strange method of rewarding faithful service actually put into operation. On the other hand, were all employees, regardless of the urgency of their work, required to take all of their earned leave as prescribed in the House rider, much overtime at premium rates or the training and hiring of temporary employees, with its inevitable disruption of work, would follow. All things considered, we believe that any savings to government through this rider would be highly problematical. We register a strong protest against its passage; in all justice we cannot do otherwise."

On May 23rd, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to strike out the House-approved rider banning leave accumulation, thus raising hopes that Congress may finally kill it.

Miscellaneous

Overtime legislation appears to be definitely out for the present Congress—killed by the small but powerful Customs Inspectors group.

It is certain that no action will be taken by this session on unemployment benefits or multiple taxation.

OPEDA's four current Standing Committees have reported rather fully on their activities through the newsletters. I do want to add from the standpoint of our office records, however, that many members have recently been very active in bringing others into the OPEDA fold. What have you done?—Frederick V. Rand, Executive Officer.

Federal Creed of Service

We as members of the civil service accept our obligation and our opportunity to serve the American people well and in full measure doing our best to further the free and democratic institutions of our country. We believe it is our duty to: Carry out loyally the will of the people as expressed in our laws; serve the public with fairness, courtesy, integrity, and understanding; help improve the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of our work... and thus do our part in performing the great services of the Government. (Adopted by the Federal Personnel Council.)

"Can You Top This?"

The palm for bringing in new members was awarded by the recent OPEDA Council meeting to Mr. Willard W. Carpenter (SCS), Lexington, Ky. Single handed, he has added some 30 new members during the spring season.

The Members Speak

"May I suggest that some thought be given to the setting up of separation registers due to insufficient funds, with a provision that those eligible for retirement be separated first? This could be on a sliding scale with those having the longer years of service first, etc. Also I would like to see the retirement age lowered to 55 years for those with 30 or more years of service. The above procedure would keep the government services manned with a younger and more vigorous staff."

"Please be assured my thinking is fully in accord with OPEDA's views. You may count on my full cooperation."

"I am sorry that it is necessary to terminate my association with OPEDA. I am leaving this week and going to Germany under the Foreign Service of the State Department.—Keep up the good work—it's a wonderful organization. Best wishes."

One writes: "Thanks for your good work in '51." Another says: "Keep up your good work!"

"Will continue with OPEDA and am sending 1952 dues, even though leaving USDA." (This suggests the comment—apparently unknown to many—that all who have joined OPEDA while in USDA service are still eligible for continuance of membership regardless of change of occupation or retirement. OPEDA has nearly 100 retired members, as well as many who have transferred to other departments or left the Federal service entirely.)

Membership Eligibility

The following notice from the Executive Committee was mailed to all members of the Council on April 24:

"A majority of the Executive Committee of OPEDA approved a recommendation to the Council at its May meeting that it approve an amendment to the constitution granting eligibility to membership of U.S.D.A. employees in GS-4, provided they give bona fide evidence from one or more superior officers that they are employed on scientific or sub-professional work for the Department of Agriculture and show real promise of becoming full professional employees."

This recommendation was unanimously adopted at the regular spring meeting of the Council on May 26 and as of that date thus becomes an amendment to Article III of the OPEDA Constitution.

On Field Chapters

"In reply to your letter of October 30 I have discussed here within the Soil Conservation Service your proposal for the formation of a local chapter of the OPEDA (in the Philadelphia area). There is really no enthusiasm for such an organization. The feeling seems to be that the Washington organization is doing a good job and there is no need for trying to get a field organization... There is just too much reaction against becoming active in another organization." (This is typical of a number of replies from OPEDA's field members. How do you feel about it? F.V.R.)

Another "Helping Hand"

One field member of OPEDA is using the following personal letter in efforts to recruit new USDA personnel to our organization:

"I am writing this letter as a personal one to you to give you some information about the Organization of Professional Employees of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Perhaps you are already a member of the organization. If you are, a great service to this institution will be done if you pass the attached sample of the official publication along to someone who is not a member. I believe the copy of the publication is largely self-explanatory in giving you an insight to the values of being affiliated with an organization of this kind.

"The annual dues are only \$2, and I have found over the years that the important information items alone are more than worth the dues that I have paid.

"This organization is the only one that is devoting its exclusive efforts to the interests of the professional group in the Department, hence I am calling it to your attention as a new employee so that you may carefully appraise the matter and decide whether or not you wish to become a member. My own feeling is that you will never regret a favorable decision to associate yourself with one of the greatest professional groups in or out of Government in the entire United States.

"On page 5 of the attached copy of OPEDA you will observe there is an application blank for your ready and convenient use in mak-

ing application for membership. If you decide to join, will you drop me a note to that effect in order that I may know whether my efforts to help increase the membership have been reasonably successful?"

A Department Professional Worker Suggests:

"The tenure of the average Federal employee has, in the past, been justifiably looked upon as relatively secure. But it is the clerical worker who is the average to whom this particularly applies. If a stenographer, file clerk, or fiscal officer finds his working conditions unsatisfactory, or his supervisor difficult, he can usually manage a change to a different assignment where he will be as efficient, or perhaps more so, than before; and if he loses his position through no fault of his own, as in the case of reduction in funds, there are other positions to which he can be transferred. His work is not too specialized to preclude effective adaptation to the new job; and there is then no serious disadvantage either to the worker or to the Federal service.

"A job as a scientific-research or other professional worker, on the other hand, is usually too specialized to be easily replicated elsewhere after some years of service have fitted him to a specialty. Actually, he becomes by this very specialized competence less fitted for other work. Except under certain rare conditions he tends to be so isolated in his particular line that when he leaves it is difficult to find anyone who is an adequate substitute. And no other unit in the whole Federal establishment is likely

to have a position with exactly the same requirements.

"When a Bureau is faced suddenly with a shortage of funds it is too often the technical or research units that first feel the pinch, and even in these units when an allotment is reduced or withdrawn it is probable that the professional worker will be among the first victims. He is likely to be looked upon as dispensable because along with his salary there is the very real expense of maintaining and replacing costly apparatus. The unit as an administrative and clerical group may possibly be kept intact until better times if this extra expense is eliminated. When funds are again available it might even get a needed infusion of new blood anyway!

"If a government employee felt that his union would back him up tooth and nail whenever he was faced with discrimination in premature dismissal, or even in matters of precedence, it is difficult to believe that the union would fail to receive ample support from a greatly increased membership. The professional and scientific workers, although now bracketed with the others in the G.S. grades, by the inherent nature of their duties and backgrounds constitute a class apart in that they are especially vulnerable to discrimination in respect to dismissal and premature retirement, a condition that is not only distressing to the individual but generally subversive of morale and thus fundamentally against the public interest. It would seem that there is ample justification for an organization sufficiently devoted to the interest of this specialized group to promote an effective means of protecting the individual member against becoming the victim of any particular discrimination."

An Important Message to You

Just a few minutes, a few words, and a few strokes of the pen—well placed—can bring in a new member. Won't you pass this issue of the newsletter on to a non-member with that in mind? The application blank below is provided for the obvious purpose of simplifying the operation. (Further copies of the newsletter available on request.)—F. D. Van Sant, Chairman, Membership Committee.

APPLICATION BLANK

Organization of Professional Employees of the
U. S. Department of Agriculture
P. O. Box 381
Washington 4, D. C.

Date _____, 195__

Application hereby is made for membership in the Organization of Professional Employees of the United States Department of Agriculture, the annual dues of which are \$2.00 per year and for which there is no initiation or membership fee.

Name (First name in full: Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr.) _____

Address _____

Bureau _____

Div. or Branch _____

Title _____

Classification: GS-_____

Enclosed is check (), currency (), money order () for \$2.00 for 195__ dues. (Checks or money orders may be made payable to Org. Prof. Employees USDA or simply to O.P.E.D.A.)

(Signature of Applicant) _____

Miss Louise O. Bercaw
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